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INDIANA LEGISLATURE.

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, Dec. 17.

Mr. Owen from a select committee to which
was referred a bill supplementary to an act
entitled "an act to provide for a general system
of Internal Improvements," reported the
same back with one amendment, which was
read and concurred in.

The House adjourned before any question
was taken upon the engrossment for a third
reading.

2 o'clock, P. M.

Mr. Berry moved to indefinitely postpone
the bill.

On the question of the indefinite postpone-
ment of the Bill being put, Mr. OWEN, of
Posey spoke as follows:

MR. SPEAKER:

I never rose, sir,—I never expect again
to rise—to address a legislative body on a
subject more vitally important than is the
subject before us to the State of Indiana.—
Were my opinions thereon less decided, or
were the duty I owe to my constituents to
express these opinions less imperative, I
should give a silent vote.

The subject, sir, naturally resolves itself in-
to two great questions. Last year an Internal
Improvement Bill passed, appropriating ten
millions for State Works. Now, the first of
the two operations, is, "shall there be any
addition to the system of last year?" the
second, "shall this be that addition?"

First, sir, as regards the propriety of any
addition. Have you ever calculated, sir,
how many counties had the benefit of our
ten million's worth of improvement last year?
thirty-nine counties, only, out of eighty-five,
leaving forty-six unprovided for; say one
half. What does this neglected half of
the State now ask for? An equal appro-
priation to that of last year? Or eight mil-
lions, say, sir, or three? Two millions is the
amount of their moderate—their most equi-
table demand.

What is the reply? That, to grant such a
request, is to endanger the safety of the State.
Indeed, sir? We are richer, by a million and
a half of surplus revenue, than last year, we
were; and because we propose to appropriate
this Godsend—this windfall, with one poor
half million more, to satisfy demands so just,
we must needs have this cry about the ruined
credit of the state rung in our ears.

U, sir, last year, an offer had been made,
to quiet with a single half million, the claims
of the disaffected, how gladly would the offer
have been accepted to. The same offer is
now virtually made—and rejected. And why,
sir? Oh! the credit of the State is in danger!

Look at your Bill, sir. Is it not a moderate
—ay, an humble one. Do we not de-
serve credit for our moderation? Was there
not temptation to overstep the limits of pro-
vidence? Yet, have we done so? Have you
never thought, sir, of the probability, that, if
these our moderate demands be rejected—if
two millions cannot carry force enough—that
three millions or four millions may? Have
you never thought of the possibility of de-
mands being raised—until the whole system
was broken down? For myself, I will lend
my aid to no such plan; see to it, whether
others may not be found less credulous. If
they be not, God knows it is not for the lack
of temptation.

But not to talk of breaking down the sys-
tem, has it never occurred to you, sir, that our
claims, like the mysterious volumes of the sybil,
might rise in value at each returning de-
mand?

I had pledged, sir, from the so-called In-
ternal Improvement party, that if our bill did
not overgo the amount originally proposed,
they would go for it. I will speak plainly,
sir. Such a pledge I had from the member
from Fountain.

Mr. EVANS of Fountain, explained, that
he had added, if the plan was a good one.

Mr. OWEN resumed. I do not pretend to
give the exact wording of the gentleman's
pledge. I can call to mind no such saving
clause. I know this, sir, that, when the or-
iginal bill was first submitted to the notice of
that gentleman, he made but one objection.
What, think you sir, was that objection? That
the interests of the state were compromised?
That her credit would go down? That ruin
and bankruptcy were before us? Oh, sir,
you are wide of the mark. The objection
was, that there was no appropriation on the
road from Crawfordsville to Covington.

See, sir, how easily this credit of the state
argument could have been got over, radically
cured, sir, with the small sum of fifty thousand
dollars, provided always (as lawyers say) that
sum had been appropriated on the road from
Crawfordsville to Covington.

But, sir, there is another notable argument,
that is continually urged against any exten-
sion, yes or alteration of the system. Its in-
fallibility is preached up. It is sacred, in-
violable. Not one jot or tittle shall be ad-
ded, not one jot or tittle taken from it. I
wonder, sir, that they do not bid us, when we
chance to cross some of the magic lines traced
out by the engineers of these infallible legis-
lators—I say, I wonder, sir, that they do not
bid us take our shoes from off our feet, for the
spots on which we tread are holy ground.

What, sir! No addition, no revision, no
amendment! A ten million system, concocted
in a week—hurried through in a day,
perfect!—and to last, untouched, forever!
Why, sir, in England; in France, Germany;
even in feudal Russia, and benighted Spain,
that principle of infallibility is going down,
and you expect that it will grow and prosper
here in a free republic?

If this doctrine of infallibility prevail, we
shall next hear of an American Council of
Nice holding her sittings and promulgating
her edicts on the shores of the Ohio in Jef-
ferson county, or perchance a Western Vati-
can rising on the banks of the Wabash, be-
side the Court House of Covington.

If this doctrine of infallibility prevail, I
shall be converted to the opinion that the
people of Indiana—no, sir, not the people,
only their representatives—are in a fair way
of becoming most orthodox Catholics. Tell
it not in Rome; repeat it not in the ancient
capital of the world; or we shall have his
Holiness the Pope—(some gentlemen would
fain have us believe that he and our President
elect are good friends already)—we shall, I
say, have the chair of St. Peter moved across
the Atlantic, and Papal Bulls issued from the
State House at Indianapolis.

(Mr. Owen here went on to review the
provisions of the Bill in detail, showing that
about half the amount appropriated was
stock subscribed in private turnpike and rail-
road companies, the taking of the rest of the
stock by individuals guaranteeing the safety
and profitable nature of the investment; That
about seven hundred and fifty thousand dol-
lars was for clay turnpikes, for completing
which, the appropriations were fully adequate;
and he entered into various details to show
the utility of the several works.) He then
proceeded.

Have you ever calculated, sir, what may
be the consequences of a refusal to sanction
claims like these, and a pertinacious adher-
ence to absurd pretensions to infallibility?
What were the consequences to England when
she asserted the same right divine principle?
Her citizens crossed the Atlantic and sought
refuge to this Western Continent. And is
not the Wabash more easily crossed than the
wide ocean, and are not Illinois' prairies as
rich and her sky as clear as ours? Are not
masses of the very best population continually
pouring into her territory. Are not thousands
daily landing at Chicago?

We of the West, sir, are migratory beings
—birds of passage. If it does not please us in
one place, we pull up stakes and go farther.
Ay, sir, and if we beyond the Rocky
mountains even to the far shores of the Pa-
cific. For it is our creed, as the poet has it:
Better to dwell in Liberty's hall,
With a cold, damp floor and a mouldering
wall,

Than to bend the neck and to bow the knee,
In the proudest palace of slavery!

You recollect, sir, doubtless, the story of
the Israelites of the olden times, how they
fled from their oppressors? And can you
expect, sir, that we should remain here to
become tax payers and bondsmen for the fa-
vored counties? To be their hewers of wood
and drawers of water? Shall we not rise up
and cross our red sea—the Wabash—into the
west—our land of promise? Be sure, sir,
such will be the result. Unless inducements
are held out—strong inducements to settle
Indiana, Illinois will obtain the start of us—
yes, and deserve to obtain it.

Is this all idle talking, sir? I would to God
it were. No, sir, I speak in sad seriousness
—in sober truth. I know the feeling that
pervades the disaffected counties. I have
had daily occasions to know it. I know how
strong it is and how far it spreads. And I
ask you, sir, whether you can believe that
the spirit that has been brooding, for a twelve
months past throughout the land—the free
enquiring spirit that asks why a point or two
in Indiana are to receive a Benjamin's portion
and the rest to be cast off as neglected step-
children without the even a pittance from the
general fund—are you credulous enough, sir,
to believe that this spirit will ever be laid, un-
til some such conciliatory measure be adopted.

Unless he, who, as we are told spoke to the
raging sea and bade it be "Peace, be still,"
unless some such influence descend among us,
ain indeed were the expectation.

How many, sir, were the apparent disaf-
fected last year? The notorious eight in a by-
word in every one's mouth. And how many
are there now prepared to stand or fall with
the measure. Count them Sir, You can as
well as I, and calculate the increase of disaf-
fection in one short twelve months.

Are we a majority? Even suppose we are
not, Sir, are we a minority to be overlooked—
contemned? You will not say so Sir. No
man will say so. Just or unjust, our claims
are as formidable as they are reasonable and
just.

Can you expect, Sir, to move on, I say not
with concert and harmony of action—but can
you expect to move on, without finding the
wheels of Government clogged at every step,
if you deny to such common justice as this?

Consider, sir, what questions are coming up.
The surplus revenue question: the three per
cent fund distribution; the specific appropria-
tion to meet the interest of the mammoth debt.
Are gentlemen prepared to vote on these? I,
for one will oppose every measure that goes
to tax my constituents, until this or some sim-
ilar bill is passed.

Perhaps, Sir, you calculate upon the plan
of buying up a few from our ranks and thus
destroying our strength in detail. I cannot
say that this is impossible. Men's hearts can
be read by the Searcher of Hearts alone.—
But if you do succeed in thus detaching a few
feeble spirits, by granting to them as an ex-
torted peace offering, some additions to the
infallible system—ay, sir, the system to which
nothing shall be added, from which nothing
shall be taken away! If, sir, you do succeed
by the sacrifice of this sworn principle of the
party in detaching from our ranks some who
were never worthy to stand there—then shall
I not envy the reputation—the after standing
—of these vacillating seceders. I mean, Sir,
not only their standing with us, but their
standing with the party that is to be benefited
by their desertion. There is such a thing,
Sir, as loving the treason and despising the
traitor. Do you recollect, Sir, the reception
of Arnold—that first and only one among
American traitors—in England, the country
which reaped the benefit of his treason. He
was introduced by the King himself to one of
the proudest among the English nobility:
"Lord Balcarras, I introduce to you General
Arnold." The reply was characteristic of
that high feeling of honor which sometimes
brizes with, and casts a graceful veil over the
odium of traitorship: "What, Sir! the
traitor Arnold?" And the indignant noble
turned on his heel, even in the face of royalty;
disdaining to give his hand to one, who, when
the times were that tried men's souls, sank
basely beneath the trial.

We have been stigmatized as disorganizers,
destructive enemies of improvement. Where,
Sir, are the proofs of these severe matters of
impeachment? Have we attacked the old
system? Have we sought to throw down, or
even the first stone of the favored edifice?
Have we sought to pull up, even the first stake
that was stuck, last year, by the hands of those
who now stand arrayed against us? And was
there not temptation so to do? Allow me to
tell you, Sir, there was. There was a propo-
sal before us to tap the Central Canal in
Warrior County, and build up a rival to E-
vansville. There was a proposal to straighten
the line from this town to Lafayette, leaving
Crawfordsville entirely out of the route; and
this plan was backed by the assurance, that
half a million would thereby be saved to the
State. Other smaller alterations were offered
—and the proposals were accompanied by
tempting offers—offers of what we wanted—
of what common sense tell us we must have to
carry our Bill—offers, Sir—of votes. Ay,
Sir, and alterations not small,—modifications
of a startling character—have been agitated
among us, too. Such modifications as the ar-
resting of the Central Canal at White River,
thus saving the million of dollars that are to be
expended on its termination. Such modifica-
tions, Sir, as the repeal of that portion of the
Act which provides for the extension of the
Wabash and Erie Canal, from the mouth of
Tippecanoe to Terre Haute. I heard, Sir,
not three days since, these modifications pub-
licly—Yes, Sir, and ably advocated, and by a
man deeply versed in the affairs of this State
—by an ex-member of Congress from Indiana.

Now, Sir, I ask you if, thus tempted, we
have yielded to the temptation; if we have not
rather, with a degree of forbearance that
strongly contrasts with the spirit that opposes
us, scrupulously refrained from putting forth
our hands to touch this self-consecrating Ark.

But, Sir, can you expect—can any man sup-
pose, that if you persist in condemning our fair
and just and modest claims, we shall always
thus scrupulously refrain? I repeat it, can
you expect that we shall thus act? I tell you
plainly, Sir, we will not. I say more, Sir;
we cannot. We are bound—bound by every
obligation to our constituents—to procure
something for those that have been neglected
—or to exert every nerve, to curtail the present
appropriations.

This, Sir, is the plain, honest unvarnished
statement of the case. Such as I have attempt-
ed to describe. Sir will be the universal feel-
ing throughout the disaffected districts, if their
claims be cast off and despised. But, Sir,
look to the other side of the question. Think
of the wide spreading gratitude that will spring
up throughout the land, to bless you, if this

bill pass, gratitude not ostentatiously expres-
sed, perhaps—not loudly obtruded on your no-
tice—but yet not less deeply felt, or warmly
remembered, on that account. As some writ-
ter has well expressed it,

The thankless oft are noisiest in their thanks.
As, on the unfruitful pavement, every drop
That falls from the kind sky is told aloud.
But, in the grateful heart, a blessing sinks,
Like the same shower upon a sunny field,
That drinks it silently; and shows its thanks
In smiles, and glad increase.

I conclude Sir, by expressing my convic-
tion:

1st. That there ought to be an addition to
last year's bill.

2d. That this bill, or some similar bill should
be that addition.

I hold this opinion Sir.

1st. Because one half the State only is pro-
vided for, by last year's bill.

2d. Because this stepmother policy will de-
populate large portions of our country.

3d. Because a refusal endangers the inte-
grity of the original system.

4th. Because a refusal will arouse and per-
petuate rakking ill-feeling and clog the wheels
of legislation.

I add, sir, that the bill I hold to be a just,
prudent, a wholesome addition:

1st. Because the principle of taking stock
in private Companies is a good and a safe prin-
ciple.

2d. Because wholly neglected portions of
the State, such as are officially referred to as
neglected in the Governor's message of this
year, are there satisfactorily provided for.

3d. Because I do not believe a much better
or more satisfactory one can be readily framed
and because I believe, that if another attempt
be made—as it will—other claims will arise and
a larger amount be required to quiet the claims
of the disaffected.

I hope, Sir for the sake of peace, for the
sake of justice, for the sake of that State's
welfare in which I have pitched my tent, and
where if anything like liberality prevail, I
hope to remain while life is spared to me, sin-
cerely, earnestly do I hope, that this bill will
be sustained and that the vote to indefinitely
postpone it, will not prevail in this House.

Mr. EVANS said,

MR. SPEAKER:—I am not in the habit of mak-
ing apologies, but deem it due to myself on
this occasion to say, that my present state of
health is such as to prevent me from doing
that justice to the important subject, which it
deserves. Unlike the gentleman from
Posey, Mr. Speaker, I neither speak from
notes, nor preparation, consequently, that
connection which would add to the beauty of
the figure, may not be found, in what I have
to say. I shall, however, endeavour, in my
own way to give my vote for the motion now
pending—the indefinite postponement of this
bill.

In the first place, sir, let me answer some
of the remarks of the gentleman from Posey.
He tells us, that the internal improvement bill
of the last session was conceived in a week,
and brought forth in a day. I am happy in
being surrounded by gentlemen, who will
know how far this assertion is grounded in fact.
Like the charter of our State Bank, it was the
result of one year's reflection. That Bank,
which has given to Indiana a sound circulating
medium, and the charter of which, has been
pronounced by able financiers, the safest now
in existence, passed after a failure on the part
of its friends at previous session. Let us not
then hear more, and of the quick conception
and rapid birth of the internal improvement
bill.

The gentleman tells us, that the system is
not general, because there are many counties
not provided for. Does the gentleman believe,
that to make a measure general it must be
universal? Does he believe, that before our
system can be general, every county, town,
neighborhood, and individual in the state
must be immediately accommodated, and
their whims gratified? If so, his system is
one, which neither the means, nor the policy
of the state will be able to adopt, which, in
this case, would be unwise to pursue in its
most unlimited sense? The gentleman has
spoken eloquently of liberty. I suppose, he
would in order to have a man free, make him
a wandering child of nature, restrained by no
laws neither civil or divine and quieted only
by the laws of nature, and they rendered
almost inaccessible by false tradition. He
tells us, that the counties south of White
River have been entirely excluded. How far
Mr. Speaker, is this assertion true. Does
not the central and Wabash and Erie canal
below their junction, run through four of
those counties which is to mingle the waters
of Lake Erie with the Ohio, and bear upon
their bosom the products of two thirds of this
state, and a fine portion of Illinois, and these
favours extend to those counties, notwithstanding
the opposition of almost all of their mem-
bers; and yet gentlemen talk of buying votes!

He has alluded to my town, Sir, in terms
which I did not distinctly hear. This much
I feel free to admit, that my town is an hun-
dred one, and I, as one of its citizens and
representative do not by any legislation here
expect to give it that place on history's page,
which that gentleman's town, New Harmony,

already has. Sir in the last ages, his town
will be known, as the place where the doc-
trine was preached, that the three great evils
of this world were, marriage, money, and
religion—where that philosophy was inculcat-
ed, which would turn the lads and lasses into
the clover fields of nature, to sip at every
sweet, unrestrained by any principle; but that
same instinct, which belongs to the brute.

The gentleman from Posey, says, that unless
the discontented are quieted, they will leave
the State and people for the wilds and prairies
of the farther west; and in his remarks has
ascended to the Pinnacle of Mount Parnassus,
and called the flowers that grow there. Per-
haps he will not object to a poetical quotation
from me, when I tell him, that should they
emigrate for this cause.

"They will leave their country, for their
country's good."

I will now, Sir, take up the bill and give
my objections to it in detail. And first, I
object to it because it is not what it professes
to be, a two million bill, I think there is no
intelligent person who can believe for one
moment but that the works will cost at least
ten millions. Secondly I object to it, be-
cause many of them provided for there are
extremely local—commencing at no place
and ending at no place and forming no im-
portant connection with other parts of the
Union. This last feature in a system, I con-
ceive to be fatally objectional. If this Union
is to be perpetuated, it will be by those im-
portant artificial connections, which will in
some degree "annihilate time and space,"
bringing distant countries together, providing
a community of interest, a sameness of char-
acter and mingling of their surplus commodi-
ties as well as their enterprising sons. The
bill Sir, is palpably unequal. Look at it.

Almost every town on the Ohio within our
State, that great Canal of nature where the
"impress of Fulton's immortal genius" is gazed
at with delight almost every hour of the day,
has a Canal, rail road or McAdamsed or
turnpike road terminating at it, while the north
and north west is only provided for in that
manner alone, which the friends of this bill
considered sufficient, to buy up their votes.
Sir, I tell them if they go for this bill, they
are sold for a song which they them-
selves must sing. Take a few examples.

On the road from Vincennes to Terre Haute,
about sixty miles, where the work can be
easily done, the bill appropriates one hun-
dred and fifty thousand dollars—then take
the road from Terre Haute to Monticello, a
distance of one hundred and twenty miles, it
appropriates sixty thousand dollars, a sum not
sufficient to clear off the forest trees. This
sum I suppose was sufficient to purchase the
rewards of Vermilion and Warren. On the road
from Mount Vernon to Princeton, about forty
five miles, one hundred and twenty five
thousand dollars is to be expended, when a
road of equal distance more difficult
to make from Greencastle by Rockville to
the Wabash has given it just seventy thousand
dollars, the supposed value of the members
from Parke.

The Road from Jeffersonville to Colum-
receives two hundred and fifty thousand
dollars, while the Erie and Michigan
most two hundred miles, receives
dred thousand dollars, and the Mic-
about the same distance receives
and seventy five thousand dollar
we are told is to provide for
North. Sir, it is not now, re-
that I should prove my will
thid north. The records of
of this Legislature abund-
eoted to give them an in-
representation over some consti-
doubts, when they were almost un-
both in committee and in the house, their
northern canal and I think contributed at
least in some degree to its success, when the
whole of that delirious country, had but two
representatives of this floor, & am now willing
to add to our internal improvement scheme,
in which addition I would give no vote to
exclude them—but for this bill, I would not
go, were all its benefits extended to myself.

The bill of last winter, with all its defects,
has this virtue—it is stripped of locality, and
all its works have important connections. I
believe however its most obvious objection is
its amount. In this, Sir, I am sustained by
the opinion of those wholly disinterested, and
whose every wish we have. In my trip east,
the past summer, the language of all was,
that it was a bold scheme, and the amount
to be expended so large, as almost to render
its completion impossible.

But, sir, notwithstanding all this, in order
to produce concert of action throughout this
our growing State, I would be willing to add
one million, and a half more, but, sir, if I do
it, I would require its appropriation on works
of a general nature and those which I can be-
made believe, will yield to the State some-
thing in return. I hope the bill will be in-
definitely postponed.

Mr. Owen begged the indulgence of the
chair for a very few moments on a matter of
no consequence to the House, except in as far
as a great principle was therein involved.
The gentleman from Fountain professed not
to understand the allusion to his town. It was

INDIANAPOLIS